

# Gun Control

I offer a proposal for gun control which reflects the basic issues of individual rights and public safety.

## A History of Militias

In the 1700s the purpose of a militia was to defend the town against attack from outsiders and repel invaders. Militias were an affordable alternative to an established army. At that same time, citizens had rifles to hunt game animals for food. If the same citizens were also members of a militia, for which they may have been paid, they supplied their own rifle.

After the conclusion of the Revolutionary War, the new American government tried to establish a federal army. The Articles of Confederation required the individual states to establish a militia with necessary equipment. These militias did not do well, forcing the federal government to rely on its standing army, the Continental Army. General George Washington considered the militia to be worthless as a defensive military group, lacking as they did military training, discipline, and equipment.

## Constitutional Protections

When the Articles of Confederation were replaced by the Constitution, Congress was authorized to organize, arm, and discipline a Militia in addition to raising an army and a navy. Use of the Militia was limited to three specific missions.

The Bill of Rights (1791) was a group of ten changes to the Constitution. Rather than change individual articles of the Constitution, they were handled as supplemental additions (codicils) to it. Each of the changes became its own numbered amendment. The Second Amendment is the one that addresses militias and gun ownership and use:

“A well regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed.”

Today we have difficulty making a distinction between personal use of a rifle for hunting and target shooting, and for execution — of individuals or groups.

## Role of the NRA

The National Rifle Association (NRA) was founded in 1871, in the wake of the Civil War, to establish programs to improve marksmanship among interested men; they started with target competitions, then set up rifle clubs in colleges. A casual read of their history reveals an organization that has been consistently growing in reach and impact, it reminds me of an ambitious corporation. Today it is focused on training new shooters and preserving “2nd amendment rights.” It has nonprofit tax status. It has a board of 76 directors and executive officers (which are not named on their website). They get funding from firearms manufacturers and individual memberships.

The NRA lobbies aggressively to preserve the ability of Americans to own and use any kind of weapon they desire. They use fear of confiscation to motivate their members.

## Mass Shootings are Mass Executions

It is the ever increasing number of mass shootings — homicides — that has led to increasing public outcry for “gun control.” The NRA lobbying pushes the story that guns are the innocents here, it is the shooters that need regulation. But this argument is entirely specious. As long as regulations tiptoe around the fact that mass shooters are not using single-shot pistols and hunting rifles to execute *en masse*, but automatic weapons designed for military use, the illegal executions will continue.

Congress dithers about the so-called Second Amendment rights of individuals while ignoring the rights of their victims to a life of peace and freedom.

## A Gun Control Proposal

I suggest a different approach:

### For prospective gun owners

- a) Restrict personal gun ownership to single-shot weapons. This excludes guns with bullet magazines, like automatic pistols and AR-15s, from private ownership.
- b) Limit the number of guns an individual can possess at the same time.
- c) Require proof of skill at operating a weapon and knowledge of applicable laws and regulations. Require proof of mental competency. This is similar to an automobile driver license. And, to continue that analogy, there could be different licenses for hand guns, shot guns, and rifles. Require a fee to process the license application. Require the application be made in person. This requirement will involve an agency be created to process the applications for new and renewed licenses; see (j) below.
- d) Require relicensing at periodic intervals, perhaps every 4 years.
- e) Prohibit gun and ammunition sales to unlicensed people, regardless of venue. So sales at gun shows will be subject to the same regulations as sales at stores.
- f) Consider requiring a bond of the owner-licensee.

### For gun manufacturers and sales outlets

- g) Require handling and recordkeeping that ensures all manufactured guns are accounted for, as being delivered to and received by the military or sales outlets. Deliveries to sales outlets are subject to fees payable to the federal government regulatory agency.
- h) Require sales outlets verify the prospective buyer's license and keep records on the acquisition and sale of every gun.

### For state governments

- i) Establish a means by which individuals can sell their guns to other individuals. Such a means shall include recordkeeping and perhaps a fee to cover government recordkeeping costs.
- j) Establish an agency to process the requests for new and renewed licenses; this might be a new agency or an existing one. The agency will also handle the application fees, with accounting and public reporting.

### For the federal government

- k) Establish an agency to coordinate gun owner licensing at the state level.
- l) Establish an agency to collect, maintain, and analyze regular reports by sellers, this includes manufacturers (who have direct sales), sales outlets, and gun sales between individuals.
- m) Establish an agency to collect, maintain, and analyze regular reports by manufacturers, with emphasis on distribution channels.

n) Establish an agency to collate all information and publish it to the public and the state agencies.

So, the basis for this is:

- restrictions to the numbers and types of guns in private ownership,
- licensing of private gun owners,
- recordkeeping by state and federal agencies,
- fees paid by private gun owners, sales outlets, and manufacturers to cover the administration costs,  
and
- public reporting of all activities in the aggregate.